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### Bilingual life after school

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# **BILINGUAL LIFE AFTER SCHOOL: OPPORTUNITY, CHOICE AND IDEOLOGY AMONG FORMER GAELIC-MEDIUM STUDENTS**

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## **Abstract**

This article examines the language use and ideologies of participants in a 2015 study of Gaelic-medium educated adults, a key demographic for language maintenance. The author investigated outcomes of Gaelic-medium education (GME) among a sample of 130 adults who started in GME during the first years of its availability in Scotland, in the late 1980s and 1990s. This project drew on both quantitative and qualitative methods to assess the degree to which past GME students use Gaelic, along with the attitudinal and ideological correlates which may underlie this usage. An online questionnaire focusing on language use elicited 112 responses between 2011 and 2013. These were analysed statistically to examine the relationships between social and linguistic variables. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 46 informants to examine these issues in greater detail. Crucially, the majority of participants' day-to-day Gaelic language use was limited, although notable exceptions to this were found among speakers who were substantially socialised in the language during childhood, and those who work in Gaelic-oriented professions. Specifically, this paper addresses the extent to which participants use Gaelic in the work, home and community environments, and examines one set of language ideologies that appears to underlie these language practices. The discussion draws on both statistical and qualitative data to shed further light on the overall sociolinguistic picture which emerged from the study.

## Introduction

This paper presents findings from a 2015 study which examined language use and ideologies among a sample of 130 adults who started in Gaelic-medium education (henceforth ‘GME’) during the first years of its availability in Scotland (Dunmore 2015). As part of this research an online survey of language use and attitudes elicited 112 responses between 2011 and 2013. 28 of these participants were also interviewed, as were 18 further individuals. Qualitative and quantitative analyses demonstrated that the majority of participants’ social use of Gaelic is limited today, although notable exceptions were found among some speakers who were substantially socialised in the language at home during childhood or who work in the language. This finding is perhaps unsurprising in light of existing research on second language teaching and pupils’ limited use of target languages outwith the education system (see e.g. Ó Riagáin & Ó Gliasáin 1979; Fishman 1991, 2001a; Heller 1995; Hickey 2001; Potowski 2004). Yet the significance of this finding has important implications for language policy priorities in Scotland. This paper focuses specifically on the degree to which participants reported using the Gaelic language in the work, home and community environments, before moving on to examine the sociological and ideological correlates of these language practices. Former-GME students’ socialisation in Gaelic at home during childhood appears from the quantitative analysis to have an important bearing on rates of Gaelic language use with various interlocutors in adulthood. Similarly, continuation with GME after completion of primary school seems also to play a crucial role, correlating consistently with higher rates of Gaelic use. Yet a frequently occurring language ideology discernible in the interview material I analysed tends to rationalise (and possibly reinforce) the overall limited Gaelic use among most participants in the research.

## Gaelic in the early 21st century

The 2011 UK census showed a 2.2% decline in the number of people claiming an ability to speak Gaelic in Scotland compared to the 2001 census. This was a notable decrease in the rate of decline from ten years previously, when the equivalent loss was 11.1% from the 1991 figure. In total 57,602 people over the age of three were reported to be able to speak Gaelic in 2011, approximating to 1.1% of the total population of Scotland (NROS 2013a). The census also showed growth, for the first time, in the number of Gaelic speakers under the age of 20. Although the proportion of individuals in this group able to speak Gaelic increased by just 0.1% compared to the figure in 2001, the actual increase in numbers of speakers under 25 grew by 8.6% from 2001 (NROS 2015: 9). This growth compared to a 4.6% decline in numbers of speakers aged 25 and over, and policymakers made a great deal of its importance in demonstrating the success of GME in Scotland. The then chief executive of Bòrd na Gàidhlig stated of the figures in 2014 that:

The number of Gaelic speakers in Scotland has almost stabilised since the census of 2001. This is mainly due to the rise in Gaelic-medium education [...and] shows that within the next ten years the long term decline of the language could be reversed. (Bòrd na Gàidhlig 2014)

The significance attached to GME for language policy objectives is similarly emphasised in the following extract from a consultation paper published by the Scottish Government on a prospective Gaelic education bill. The principles of this document, and the consultation it invited, were subsequently integrated within the Education (Scotland) Act 2016:

The Scottish Government's aim is to create a secure future for Gaelic in Scotland. This will only be achieved by an increase in the numbers of those learning, speaking and using the language. Gaelic medium education can make an important contribution to this, both in terms of young people's language learning but

also in terms of the effects this can have on language use in home, community and work. (Scottish Government, 2014: 3)

Thus the importance attached by policymakers to GME as a means by which not only to increase rates of Gaelic language acquisition in school, but also to socialise children into patterns of language use that will later impact on their language practices at home and at work, is clearly apparent in such contemporary statements of policy (cf. National Gaelic Language Plan 2012–17; Bòrd na Gàidhlig 2012). There is a clear aspiration in current language policy that GME will substantially increase numbers of Gaelic speakers by equipping students to use the language throughout their adolescent and adult lives. Yet very little research has previously been conducted on whether GME indeed does impact on (past or present) students' linguistic practices in this way; whilst it is the intention of many policymakers that the system will equip children to lead a bilingual life after school, it has not been clearly demonstrated that this is (or is not) in fact the case. Neither has comparable research previously assessed the long-term outcomes of bilingual and immersion education in revitalisation initiatives internationally. As a response, the principal research objectives of my investigation sought to address the role that Gaelic may play in the day-to-day lives of former Gaelic-medium students; how and when do they use the language?

Additionally, the qualitative and quantitative analyses examined the sociological and ideological correlates of participants' professed language practices in order to shed further light on the inter-relationship of these factors.

### **Language revitalisation and immersion education: Theoretical approaches**

Lambert and Tucker (1972: 225) first coined the expression 'immersion education', describing an innovative French-medium programme for Anglophone children in 1960s

Quebec as ‘immersion in a ‘language bath’, that would lead to bilingualism by the end of primary school. This model, through which children would receive full immersion in the target language until second grade, when L1 instruction was introduced and then gradually increased, was subsequently replicated in diverse contexts internationally as a means of revitalising minority languages. García (2009: 128) has glossed this particular variety as ‘immersion revitalisation’ education, and GME was established in 1985 on the basis of this model (largely via the experience of Welsh-medium education).

Whilst GME occupies a prominent position in contemporary language policy, various leading scholars have theorised that the long-term impact of immersion education on language revitalisation initiatives may be undermined by a number of socio-psychological factors. The late Joshua Fishman, for instance, stated famously that minority languages at which RLS (‘reversing language shift’) efforts are focussed require spaces for their informal use in the crucial domains of home and community ‘*before* school begins, outside of school, during the years of schooling and afterwards, when formal schooling is over and done with’ (Fishman 2001b: 471). Suzanne Romaine (2000: 54) has similarly observed that ‘[the] inability of minorities to maintain the home as an intact domain for the use of their language’ has often proved a fundamental factor in instances of language shift. This parallels Fishman’s emphasis on the difficult task of securing the minoritised variety as the language of the home – and the failure to do so contributing in large part to the failure of language revitalisation initiatives generally (Fishman, 1991: 406; see also Edwards 2009, 2010a; Heller 2006, 2010; Jaffe 2007a, b; Romaine 2006).

On the basis of various meta-analyses of the effectiveness of French immersion education in Canada (see e.g. Harley 1994; MacFarlane & Wesche 1995; Johnstone 2001), Edwards (2010a: 261) notes that in spite of their greater command in the target language, immersion pupils generally appear not to

seek out opportunities to use their second language to a greater extent than, for instance, students studying it as a subject. Similarly, Baker (2011: 265) observes that '[p]otential does not necessarily lead to production' of the target language outside of the classroom.

Whilst the limitations of education for revitalising minority languages without sufficient support in the home have, therefore, been widely theorised, empirical research on long-term outcomes of minority language-medium education has been relatively scarce. Case studies of former immersion education students in Wales (Hodges 2009), Ireland (Murtagh 2007) and Catalonia (Woolard 2011) have nevertheless offered some revealing conclusions in this regard. Use of Welsh and Irish by past immersion students in those contexts was found to be limited in Murtagh (2003) and Hodges's (2009) respective studies. Catalan language use by former immersion students in Woolard's (2011) research was notably greater, likely reflecting that language's divergent setting and stronger demographic base (cf. Pujolar & Gonzalez 2013). Yet whilst it is the hope of many teachers, parents and policymakers that immersion education will equip children to lead bilingual lives, using their two languages into adulthood, the long-term success of this outcome has not previously been adequately assessed.

## **Methodology**

In response to this apparent lacuna in the literature, an online questionnaire to survey former Gaelic-medium students' reported language abilities, use, and attitudes was designed and uploaded. Gaelic and English versions of the questionnaire were designed, and bilingual invitations to the corresponding web links were subsequently dispatched to potential respondents via email, Facebook or Twitter, with participants offered the choice of completing the questionnaire in whichever language (Gaelic or English) they felt more comfortable with. A catalogue of 210

individuals was eventually collated, and invitations to participate in the research were systematically distributed among contacts.<sup>1</sup> Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with 46 individuals (28 of whom also completed the questionnaire) to examine issues of language use and ideology from a qualitative perspective. The choice of language for the interview was decided by the interviewee. Of these 46 speakers, 31 were female and 15 male; 17 were raised in the urban Lowlands of Scotland, 12 in the Highlands, and 17 in the Inner and Outer Hebrides.

A total of 112 questionnaire responses were eventually elicited, representing a response rate of 53.3% to the 210 invitations I distributed personally. This response rate would be smaller (34.3%) if the additional 117 invitations sent by a colleague are factored into this total, though there may well have been some overlap between the two groups. The online questionnaire contained 30 questions, spread over three overarching sections on social background, language use, and attitudes. In the first section, questions were asked on the age, sex, occupation, current location and home town of participants, as well as their continuation with GME beyond primary school, and with the study of Gaelic generally. Additional questions were asked on participants' further and higher education attendance, the proportions of languages that were used in their childhood homes and communities, and change in relation to Gaelic language practices since leaving school. In addition to the social variables of age, sex and occupational class, therefore, data were collected on the social geography and linguistic socialisation of informants during childhood, including their continuation with GME after primary school. The analysis presented in this article will focus on important findings from participants' responses to these first two sections of the questionnaire, as well as interviewees' narratives concerning Gaelic use. The following analytic sections of this paper firstly address the social backgrounds of respondents, particularly in respect of home language socialisation during childhood and continuation with



GME after primary school. I then move on to consider their reported language practices in various key domains and with different interlocutors, before discussing statistical correlations that were identified between sociological and linguistic variables of Gaelic use. Lastly, I draw attention to a language ideology frequently expressed in interviews, which conceived of Gaelic use as a matter of ‘choice’ and/or ‘opportunity’.

### **Social backgrounds of questionnaire respondents**

73 of the 112 questionnaire respondents were female (65.2%) and 39 were male (34.8%), possibly reflecting the self-selected nature of questionnaire responses. 49 of the questionnaires were returned via the Gaelic version of the survey (43.8%), while 63 were completed in English (56.2%). As indicated previously, 28 of the 112 questionnaire respondents were also interviewed, representing 25% of the total. In terms of age, individuals in the 24-32 age-bracket were initially targeted in email invitations so as to ensure coverage of respondents who started in GME between 1985 and 1992, the first eight years of the system’s availability in Scotland; ultimately the average (mean) age of respondents was 25.1, after all completed questionnaires were returned via the online survey tool.

Table 1, below, displays informants’ reported language socialisation during childhood. Crucially for the analysis presented here, over two thirds (67.9%) of respondents reported growing up in homes that were predominantly English-speaking during childhood, while over three quarters (75.9%) were raised in predominantly English-speaking communities:

**Table 1: Reported socialisation in Gaelic**

<b>Language Use</b>	<b>What languages were used in the home in which you were raised?</b> N (%)	<b>What languages were used in the wider community?</b> N (%)
Only English	29 (25.9)	40 (35.7)
More English than Gaelic	42 (37.5)	45 (40.2)
Equal English and Gaelic	12 (10.7)	11 (9.8)
More Gaelic than English	24 (21.4)	16 (14.3)
Other languages	5 (4.5)	0 (0)
<b>Total</b>	<b>112 (100)</b>	<b>112 (100)</b>

As may be seen from table 1, 36 respondents reported growing up in homes where Gaelic was used to at least an equal degree as English (32.1%), while 42 reported greater use of English than Gaelic (37.5%) and 29 reported English only (25.9%). More Gaelic use was reported of respondents' homes than communities; this is likely to be at least partly attributable to the responses of informants raised in the Lowlands. The 'more English than Gaelic' category was again the largest reported for language use in the wider community that respondents were raised in, with 45 (40.2%) reporting 'more English than Gaelic' and 40 'only English' (35.7%).

Tables 2-3, below, display informants' reported continuation with Gaelic study after completing GME at primary school. As can be seen from table 2, continuation with Gaelic-medium instruction in subjects other than Gaelic is greatly reduced at secondary level compared to primary, reflective of limited secondary GME provision during the period in question.

Less than a third of respondents (32.1%) studied two or more subjects through Gaelic at secondary school, while a further quarter (24.1%) studied just one other subject in addition to Gaelic. The largest group of respondents, however, studied only Gaelic as a subject in secondary school (42.0%):

**Table 2: Continuation with GME at secondary school**

<b>GM subjects at secondary</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
None	2	1.8
Gaelic only	47	42.0
+1 other subject	27	24.1
+2 other subjects	17	15.2
+3 other subjects	9	8.0
> 3 other subjects	10	8.9
<b>Total</b>	112	100

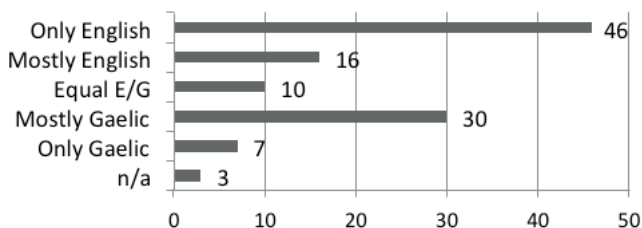
Levels of continuation with Gaelic as a subject were relatively high, with only two informants reporting that they ceased Gaelic study altogether at the end of primary school (cf. category 9; table 3, below). 55 further respondents (49.1%) reported continuing Gaelic study until some point in high school (categories 5–8), while the same number again continued to study Gaelic at college or university level (categories 1–4). Of the latter group, 38 went on to gain an undergraduate qualification in Gaelic, amounting to just over a third (33.9%) of all questionnaire respondents (categories 1–2).<sup>2</sup>

**Table 3: Extent of continuation with Gaelic study**

Level of study	N	%
1. Postgraduate degree	2	1.8
2. Undergraduate degree	36	32.1
3. Some university	10	8.9
4. Some college	7	6.3
5. Advanced Higher	5	4.5
6. Higher Grade	29	25.8
7. Standard Grade	14	12.5
8. Some High School	7	6.3
9. Primary School	2	1.8
<b>Total</b>	112	100

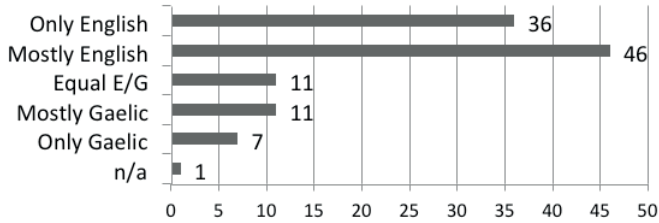
### Language use

In response to each question on the online language use survey participants were asked to indicate which language they would normally use in a variety of domains and speech situations (see Hymes 1974), using a 5-point scale ranging from ‘Only English’ to ‘Only Gaelic’, with a further option of ‘Not applicable’. Figure 1, below, shows respondents’ reported use of Gaelic and English at work or university.

**Fig. 1: Language use at work/university (n)**

As can be seen from figure 1, 46 respondents (41.1%) indicated that they normally used ‘only English’ at work or university whilst a further 16 (14.3%) reported using ‘mostly’ English. Whilst a clear majority therefore reported using ‘only’ or ‘mostly’ English at work or university, 41.9% claimed to use at least ‘equal’ Gaelic and English. 10 participants claimed to make equal use of English and Gaelic (8.9%) with 30 claiming to use ‘mostly Gaelic’ (26.8%) and a further 7 claiming ‘only Gaelic’. This proportion is likely to be unrepresentative of GME-leavers generally, given the small size of the Gaelic labour market relative to English-medium employment in Scotland (see Macleod 2008; Campbell et al. 2008). Yet, crucially, when we compare reported language use in the more formal domain of work to that within the home (figure 2, below), we see substantially lower levels of Gaelic use in that setting:

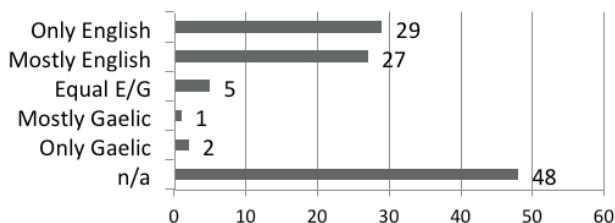
**Fig. 2: Language use at home (n)**



82 participants claimed to use ‘only’ or ‘mostly’ English in the home, amounting to 73.2% of the total. By contrast, just 25.9% claimed to use at least ‘equal’ Gaelic at home, with 11 informants indicating equal English and Gaelic use (9.8%), 11 reporting ‘mostly Gaelic’ (9.8%), and 7 reporting ‘only Gaelic’ (6.3%). Significantly, therefore, informal use of Gaelic within the home setting appears at first glance to be relatively weak. This finding is perhaps unsurprising in light of the literature discussed above in respect of immersion pupils’ socialisation in

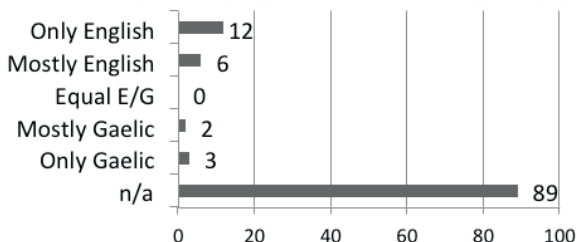
minority languages (see Fishman 1991, 2001a; Ó Riagáin & Ó Gliasáin 1979; Heller 1995; Hickey 2001; Potowski 2004). Respondents' language use with a partner or spouse is displayed in figure 3, below. As may be seen, English predominates to an even greater extent in relation to language use with a partner:

**Fig. 3: Language use with Partner/Spouse (n)**



Whilst only 64 respondents (57.1%) reported that they were currently in a relationship (figure 3, above) just 8 of these reported 'equal'-to-'only' Gaelic use with their partner or spouse, amounting to just 12.5% of those in a relationship. When we consider respondents' language use with offspring (figure 4, below), the pattern of relative disuse becomes even more apparent:

**Fig. 4: Language use with Son/Daughter (n)**



While just 23 of the 112 participants (20.5%) responded that they have a son or daughter currently, only 5 of that number (21.7%) reported speaking at least 'equal' Gaelic to their children, with 18 speaking 'mostly' or 'only' English to them (78.3%). The fact that only 11 of the 23 respondents with children (47.8%) reported using *any* Gaelic with them (6 of whom report 'mostly English') is particularly notable, especially when the wider policy objectives associated with GME in Scotland are considered. Furthermore, 4 respondents who reported speaking Gaelic to their children did not claim to do so with their partners. Whilst a large majority of questionnaire participants (79.5%) reported not having children at present, intergenerational transmission of Gaelic among the 20.5% of respondents who did so appears from the above data to be rather weak. Further in-depth research would be needed to ascertain rates of IGT among GME-leavers generally. Again, however, the preliminary finding of low levels of Gaelic use with partners and children is perhaps unsurprising when we consider existing theoretical and empirical works discussed above. If the types of language use into which immersion pupils are socialised at school pertain chiefly to education, it should come as little surprise if they are unable (or unwilling) to speak the target language to loved ones in future, or to transmit it to their own children at home.

### **Correlational statistics**

The non-parametric correlational test Spearman's rank order coefficient ('Spearman's *rho*') was used to examine relationships between social and linguistic variables. This test calculates a value ( $\rho$ , or '*rho*') to represent the correlation between two ranked sets of ordinal data. As the sample analysed was not random, the results of this test are not discussed in relation to statistical significance. Instead, particularly noteworthy correlations are displayed in bold typeface below and discussed

in light of what they may indicate. Table 5 displays correlations between reported Gaelic use with family members, and the five sociological factors of age, sex, class, Gaelic language socialisation, continuation in GME. The effect of language socialisation is clearly apparent when we consider reported Gaelic language use with particular interlocutors:

**Table 5. Family Gaelic use—linguistic and social variables  
Spearman's rho correlations**

Gaelic use with family member	Age	Sex	Class	Home Gaelic socialisation	GME continuation after primary
Mother	.161	.035	.161	<b>.511</b>	.362
Father	.099	.015	.302	<b>.502</b>	.154
Partner/spouse	.108	.117	.010	.161	.416
Son/daughter	.145	.323	.196	<b>.669</b>	<b>.645</b>
Grandmother /-father	.161	.035	.052	<b>.514</b>	.465
Brother/ sister	.110	.121	.010	.238	.203
Other family	.053	.055	.007	.319	<b>.521</b>

Age, sex and occupational class do not correlate substantially with family language use in table 5. By contrast, high levels of Gaelic socialisation correlate relatively strongly with continued Gaelic use with mothers ( $=.511$ ), fathers ( $=.502$ ), grandparents ( $=.514$ ) and, crucially, with children ( $=.669$ ). These correlations highlight the importance of language socialisation in childhood to participants' continued use of Gaelic, and potential ability to pass the language on to their own children. Importantly, however, strong correlations are also observed between present Gaelic use with a child and continuation with GME ( $=.645$ ), reflecting the importance of these variables to higher rates of



intergenerational transmission of the language. A relatively strong correlation ( $r=.521$ ) is also found between GME continuation and Gaelic use with ‘other’ family members (such as aunts, uncles and cousins). The correlation of Gaelic use with a partner or spouse is somewhat weaker ( $r=.415$ ), though still notably stronger than with any variable of age, sex or class.

### **Language ideologies of former-GME students: ‘Opportunity and choice’**

The linguistic anthropologist Michael Silverstein (1979: 193) first defined linguistic ideologies (more frequently language ideologies in subsequent works) as ‘sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure or use’. Research in the fields of linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics has proliferated since the early 1990s, authors frequently observing that beliefs of this kind can be advanced in speakers’ discourse as attempted rationalisations for their language practices, which may in turn reinforce those practices. Thus Makihara (2010: 41) views language ideologies as ‘cultural sensitivities [...] about language, its use, and its users’ which may determine the direction of linguistic change, while Kroskrity (2004: 496) regards them as ‘rationalisations’ for language practices, which are ‘embodied in communicative practice’. One particular set of rationalisations for Gaelic use that appeared frequently in my qualitative analysis of interview material concerns the (seemingly) complementary ideologies of *opportunity* and *choice* to use the language. Ideologies of Gaelic language use conveying a view of language choice in neoliberal terms have been examined by McEwan-Fujita (2008). I argue here that the fundamental neoliberal tropes of ‘opportunity’ and ‘choice’ are similarly deployed as rationalisations for Gaelic use among former-GME students. Firstly, therefore, we may discern an ideology conceiving of Gaelic use as a question of ‘opportunity’

in interviewees' accounts of their present-day use of Gaelic. This conception is depicted clearly in the following extract, from an interview with a female raised in the Lowlands, in which she explains her relative current disuse of Gaelic:

**Extract 1.**

LF08 I've not got the opportunity if you like to speak it as much

SD Yeah [uh huh]

LF08 [Em] (.) which is a shame because (1.7) you know I do kinda miss (1.1) miss em (1.8) being able to do- to speak it to outside people in different environments [...] it's a shame that I don't get to- to use it as often as I would like

In extract 1, a lack of opportunity to use Gaelic is considered to be the chief cause of the informant's disuse of the language. Her description of this scenario as a 'shame' and her feeling of 'missing' it resonates with a widespread feeling of regret among many interviewees at their relative disuse of Gaelic at present. Yet any sense of personal culpability or guilt is absent from this account; rather, it is the lack of opportunity to speak Gaelic that is seen to account for the situation. In similar terms, speaker IF13 describes his lack of Gaelic use in rationalising his choice to conduct the interview in English:

## Extract 2.

- IF13 Are we gonna do it in English?  
SD Uh uill ,**s ann sa Ghàidhlig ma tha thu ag iarraidh?**  
Well in Gaelic if you like?  
IF13 Eh no- to be honest [I've]  
SD [Okay] that's fine yeah  
IF13 ((laughs)) barely spoken it in the last few years [...]  
I'm quite **lapach** [...] I ca- I do speak in Gaelic  
but (1.1) I think I'm quite lapach because (.)I don't  
really have anybody that I can speak it to regularly  
[...] Like you know if you're not using it does kind  
of like (.) it's probably- it would be fine if I started  
speaking- speaking it right now but I wouldn't feel  
very confident[...] I think (.) I probably- I probably  
sh:ould go along to stuff ((laughs)) I know if I don't  
use it then (.) I'll lose it kind of thing.

Participant IF13 therefore claims initially that he is '*lapach*' (faltering, or 'rusty') in the language because of a lack of Gaelic-speaking peers and interlocutors with whom he can use it. Whilst on the one hand, therefore, his relative lack of Gaelic use at present is rationalised in terms of a lack of opportunity to speak it, he later expresses awareness that opportunity to use the language may in fact exist; he reflects that he 'probably should go along' to Gaelic events, placing particular emphasis on and elongating the initial consonant of 'should' – and laughing. The reference to having the choice to attend events in Gaelic is therefore implicit in this extract. By contrast with the use of the 'opportunity' trope in rationalising Gaelic language use, interviewees in the following two extracts describe their relative disuse of Gaelic in their present day-to-day lives explicitly as a matter of choice:

**Extract 3.**

- IF07 Tha mi smaoinichadh (.) ma tha cuideigin (.) gu  
firinneach ag iarraidh a bhith beò ann an  
dòigh Ghàidhlig = *I think (.) if someone (.) truly wants  
to live in a Gaelic way*=
- SD =Seadh  
=Yeah
- IF07 gum faigh iad e- fiù 's gun smaoinichadh mu  
dheidhinn [...] tha mi a' cleachdadh a' Ghàidhlig em  
(.) ann an dòigh(3.0) ((sighs)) tha e faireachdainn  
rudeigin **àraid- tha mi ceangal Gàidhlig** gu mòr  
ri bhith beag- ri bhith òg [...] 's e dìreach a bhith dol  
air ais- 's e faireachdainn gu bheil thu dol air ais that  
they'll get it- even without thinking about it [...] I  
use Gaelic em (.) in a way (3.0) ((sighs)) it feels a  
bit strange- I associate Gaelic with being small- with  
being young [...] it's just going backwards- it's a  
feeling that you're going backwards

Using Gaelic only rarely in the present day is therefore described very clearly as a matter of choice on the part of this participant, who strongly associates using Gaelic with being a child, and with regressing to an earlier stage of life. The long pause (3.0s) and the sigh she produces toward the end of the utterance perhaps betray a sense of the language's negative associations for the speaker, who explains that she would rather 'move on' (*ghluasad air adhart*) from such childhood language practices. As such, the decision not to use Gaelic in the present day is depicted as a rational choice for informant IF07. To her mind, people who want to live through Gaelic and use the language frequently will find the opportunity to do so 'without even thinking about it'. Similarly, in the following extract, the choice not to use Gaelic is described in terms of the speaker's life priorities:

#### Extract 4.

IF04 I personally have no qualms in saying I: I want to do with my life what I want to do and I'm not gonna stay within the Gaelic world just for the sake of Gaelic [...] at the moment I'm doing Gaelic primary teaching (.) and (2.5) I won't hide the fact that I don't necessarily want to be a Gaelic primary school teacher- I'm not doing it because I feel so passionately about working in Gaelic and keeping Gaelic alive although it's very important to me [...] I'm not gonna stay in something just for the sake of Gaelic.

Choice is again seen as a key factor in this participant's use of the Gaelic language, at present and in the future. His current chosen career path is just that – a choice, and he states that it may not as such constitute a permanent commitment to using Gaelic in a professional context. This participant's future use of Gaelic is subject to other choices and opportunities that may present themselves in future. Discourses of choice and opportunity were therefore central to the ideologies of Gaelic language use that informants expressed whilst explaining and rationalising their current language practices. I argue that ideologies of this kind concerning Gaelic use tend to reinforce speakers' *limited* use of Gaelic, and to militate against more extensive engagements with the language in their day-to-day lives.

#### Conclusions

Overall levels of Gaelic use among the 130 research participants are low in comparison with English, particularly with key interlocutors often regarded as crucial to intergenerational transmission, such as partners and children. Home use of Gaelic was also generally weak throughout the questionnaire dataset as well as the interview corpus, and the more formal domains

associated with work tended to predominate for the minority of participants who reported relatively frequent Gaelic language use. In many respects, findings presented in this article in respect of limited Gaelic use by former GME students may come as little surprise to the various theorists and researchers who have examined the role of immersion education in minority language revitalisation. Indeed, a large body of literature attests to the limitations of the classroom in influencing children's language socialisation and linguistic practices (cf. Edwards 1984a, b, 2010a, b; Fishman 1991, 2001a; Heller 1995, 2006, 2010; Hickey 2001; Jaffe 2007a, b; Ó Riagáin & Ó Gliasáin 1979; Potowski 2004; Romaine 2006; Woolard 2011). From this perspective, limited use of the target language by a majority of participants would be the very outcome such scholars would predict. Yet for policymakers who view the development of GME as the principal mechanism for creating new speakers in Scotland, the findings of this investigation will likely be a source of considerable frustration. Nevertheless, the key correlates of greater Gaelic language use this study has revealed should be beneficial for the development of evidence-based language policy in Scotland.

Significantly, reported experiences of Gaelic socialisation at home during childhood correlate with higher levels of Gaelic use with key interlocutors later in life, as substantiated in the statistical analysis, which found frequent correlations attesting to the inter-relationship of the two variables. Additionally, the statistical analysis demonstrated that continuation with GME in secondary school, and with study of the language after school, was linked to higher levels of present-day Gaelic use generally, and in the domain of work/university study specifically. Higher Gaelic language socialisation and continuation with Gaelic study therefore appear to accompany greater use of the language, as might be expected. In terms of the implications of this finding for current language policy in Scotland, it is clear that the goal of strengthening Gaelic language socialisation in

the home and community needs to be prioritised alongside developing GME as a policy objective. In connection with the latter goal, correlational statistics presented in this chapter demonstrate that GME provision at the secondary level should be increased in order to ensure that progress made at primary level in relation to Gaelic language learning is not subsequently lost due to a lack of continuity in provision at high school (see also: O'Hanlon et al 2010, O'Hanlon 2012).

It is clear that the influence of each of these factors on former GME students' Gaelic use later in life, and the relationship of each to the other, are in need of further research. In particular, fine-grained ethnographic and longitudinal research would yield invaluable data on the relationship of these variables to Gaelic language use in school years, after GME, and further along the lifespan, when greater proportions of GME leavers have started families of their own. Generally speaking, however, the research discussed in this chapter provides clear evidence for the first time of longer term social and linguistic outcomes of bilingual education among adults who received GME. This evidence should be of value for the development of policy in relation both to the provision of GME as an education system, and for creating new spaces for the use of Gaelic in the home, community, and in Scottish society at large.

**Key to transcription conventions**

[words]	overlapping speech
(.)	perceivable pause < 1s duration
(2.0)	perceivable pause > 1s duration
(word)	uncertain transcription
(x)	unintelligible
xxx	(place)name omitted
/word/	non-concordant morphosyntactic usage
((word))	analyst's comments
[...]	material omitted
wo::	elongation
<u>word</u>	emphatic speech
word=	latched speech, no pause
<b>words</b>	codeswitch



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## Endnotes

1

It is likely that dozens of other potential informants, in addition to the 210 I contacted personally received information about the research and were provided with my contact details. A further 117 invitations were also distributed to former-GME students by an acquaintance of the author who was involved in the organisation of GME during the early years of its availability, and had been employed in the Gaelic education sector since then.

This proportion is likely to be higher than would be expected among all former Gaelic-medium students, although data on this issue are not currently available. The Scottish Funding Council's (2007: 13) report on Gaelic education suggested that the number of students studying Gaelic to degree level within five HE institutions was small but rising. If 33.9% of all GME-leavers in the period 1985-95 had gone onto HE Gaelic study, the figure would amount to a considerable number of Gaelic graduates in these years; this appears extremely unrealistic from data presented in the SFC report (2007: 13-4). The self-selected nature of the participants in this research should therefore again be borne in mind.